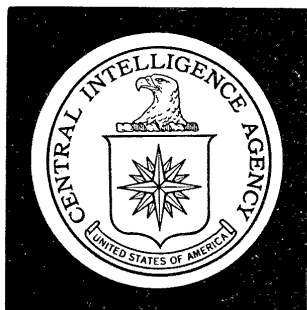




The President's Daily Brief

27 July 1969

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

Thieu continues to tone down his election proposals of 11 July for the benefit of domestic audiences. In the latest instance on 26 July, Thieu, speaking to a mass meeting of civil servants whom the President described as "confused and uncertain" over the war and peace issues, claimed that his proposals were a "tactic" to regain US and international favor, and that he and President Nixon had agreed at Midway that these would be the maximum concessions to get the Communists to negotiate seriously. Acknowledging some military criticism of his proposals, Thieu said he would never agree to let the Communist Party operate in South Vietnam and that he would even resign or restore power to the armed forces if the country rejected his peace initiatives.

Thieu's remarks to Ambassador Bunker on 26 July, as well as some recent conversations with Vietnamese officials, show that he has not yet decided on the composition of his new cabinet. He hopes to bring in some talented and well-known politicians in order to refute Viet Cong claims that Saigon does not represent a broad popular spectrum.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There are signs that some kind of military exercise--probably Soviet, but possibly Warsaw Pact--may take place shortly in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Since 19 July, a large number of Soviet military transports have been noted flying to and from these countries. Soviet tactical aircraft have also been active in East Germany. Whether ground forces are or will be involved is not known.

* * *

Reports from a meeting of the Czechoslovak party presidium on 23 July indicate the Czechoslovak leaders are seriously concerned about the possibility of disturbances centering on the 20 August anniversary of the Soviet occupation of the country. The presidium discussed provocations in both the political and economic spheres, calling on police and army to take energetic measures against those who violate "law and economic life." The phrasing suggests a direct warning to the underground press, which prepares and distributes "anti-state" leaflets, and Prague workers who engage in slowdowns and strikes.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

LAOS

Souvanna is due back in Vientiane the afternoon of 28 July after transiting Bangkok.

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CUBA - SOVIET UNION

Until the 26th of July holiday, Fidel Castro and other top leaders virtually ignored the presence of the seven-ship naval squadron that arrived a week ago. On the holiday itself, Fidel and a few other leaders were treated to a four-hour cruise on a Soviet destroyer. Afterward, Soviet sailors joined in cutting sugar cane as a display of solidarity with their hosts.

FRANCE-BIAFRA

French backing of Biafra--which included clandestine arms supply even before De Gaulle's public announcement of support in 1968--will continue at about the same level, according to Foreign Minister Schumann. In recently expressed private views, Schumann showed himself emotionally committed to the Biafran cause and disappointed that the US has not given more help. He does not go so far, however, as to favor recognition.

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